

**WETHERSFIELD PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION
PUBLIC HEARING AND MEETING**

May 5, 2015

The Wethersfield Planning and Zoning Commission held a public hearing and meeting on Tuesday, May 5, 2015 at 7:00 p.m. in the Wethersfield Town Council Chambers located at Town Hall, 505 Silas Deane Highway, Wethersfield, Connecticut 06109.

1. CALL TO ORDER:

Chairman Roberts called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m.

1.1 ROLL CALL & SEATING OF ALTERNATES (5 members required for a quorum):

Commissioner Hughes called roll as follows:

Member Name	Present	Absent	Excused
Richard Roberts, Chairman	✓		
Thomas Harley, Vice Chairman	✓		
Antonio Margiotta, Clerk	✓		
James Hughes	✓		
George Oickle	✓		
Joseph Hammer			✓
Anthony Homicki			✓
Angelo Robert Fazzina	✓		
Thomas Dean	✓		
Alex Vasel (alternate)			✓
Leigh Standish (alternate)			✓
Ryan Allard (alternate)	✓		

Also present were: Peter Gillespie, Town Planner
Denise Bradley, Assistant Planner

Members of the Public were present.

Chairman Roberts noted at the time of roll call there were six (6) full members and one (1) alternate members in attendance. Commissioner Dean arrived after the Public Hearing began.

2. OLD BUSINESS:

There was no old business discussed at this meeting.

3. NEW BUSINESS:

3.1 PUBLIC HEARING 1860-15-Z Ana Pabellon Seeking a Special Permit in accordance with Section 5.7 of the Wethersfield Zoning Regulations for a used car dealership at 1652 Berlin Turnpike.

This Application was withdrawn.

3.2 PUBLIC HEARING APPLICATION NO. 1861-15-Z John Ambruso Jr. Seeking a Special Permit in accordance with Section 5.3 of the Wethersfield Zoning Regulations for outdoor retail display at 526 Silas Deane Highway.

John Ambruso, owner of Wethersfield Small Engine, LLC located at 526 Silas Deane Highway

appeared before the Commission regarding this Application. Mr. Ambruso indicated he places his equipment by the roadside in the spring and fall to draw in customers. Because of his location and limited signage he feels many people are unaware his business exists. The lawn tractors and snow blowers are placed three (3') behind the sidewalk and do not impede pedestrians.

Commissioner Oickle inquired and Mr. Gillespie indicated the Commission has allowed outdoor displays for three (3) hardware stores in town. Commissioner Oickle expressed concern that allowing this will cause more business to request outdoor displays

Commissioner Oickle inquired and Mr. Ambruso indicated he made \$50,000 in sales this past winter. He indicated he typically displays a selection of his first order of new inventory each season, winter and spring, to allow him to move inventory. He has limited space in his building and is required to purchase a certain volume of equipment each year to remain a dealer.

Commissioner Fazzina inquired and Mr. Ambruso indicated he will be satisfied with whatever number of items for display the Commission deems appropriate. Commissioner Fazzina indicated the Commission would like input from the Applicant about number of items and timeframe being requested and Mr. Ambruso indicated he is less concerned about quantity and more concerned they will limit his timeframe.

Commissioner Fazzina inquired and Mr. Gillespie indicated the pawnshop is in constant violation by displaying items outside without a special permit and staff are aware of the ongoing issue.

Commissioner Oickle inquired and Mr. Gillespie indicated he had a discussion about signage with the Applicant and noted there are visibility issues with the shop being located in the rear. He also indicated there are zoning regulations for temporary signage.

Mr. Ambruso indicated he would rather see product on display than temporary signs and banners.

Commissioner Fazzina inquired and Mr. Ambruso indicated he takes the equipment inside at night.

Commissioner Hughes indicated he would like to see a limit on the number of items as well as a restricted timeframe. He voiced concern over other businesses like monument companies wishing to display their product outside.

Vice Chairman Harley inquired and Mr. Ambruso indicated it would not be legal to occupy a parking space with equipment.

Chairman Roberts noted the Commission did not allow a previous applicant the use of a parking space to display a hot tub.

Commissioner Allard indicated the Commission has already allowed several hardware stores to display products outside noting the Commission should be focusing on this Application.

Vice Chairman Harley indicated concern for the product being displayed by the road whereas the hardware stores are using space that is set back.

Commissioners Hughes and Harley went into discussion about hardware stores.

Commissioner Fazzina reminded the Commission about the argument posed around the City Fish sign being used to set precedent for animated signage - City Fish had given up a large portion of their signage in order to get the new sign. He noted Mr. Ambruso was before the Commission to ask for this Special Permit because he does not have the frontage that other businesses do thus making him an exception.

Commissioner Hughes maintained the correlation between rent rates and visibility to which Commissioner Fazzina indicated had this business asked to set up shop in the front of a building the Commission would have frowned upon the location based on the type of business.

Commissioner Hughes inquired and Mr. Ambruso indicated he would like to display five (5) units twice

a year in the spring and fall for a total of sixteen (16) weeks.

Chairman Roberts noted the location out front keeps equipment out of parking spaces and away from traffic. Mr. Ambruso indicated it is located opposite the exit and entrance with a tree belt, sidewalk, three (3') feet of pavement and a curb between the equipment and the roadway.

Commissioner Oickle was unaware of any Zoning Regulations regarding outdoor displays

Chairman Roberts indicated to Commissioner Oickle that section 5.3.A.8 of the Zoning Regulations speaks to outdoor merchandise sales and display by special permit

Commissioner Oickle inquired and Mr. Gillespie indicated if there is room for a display and certain requirements are met, the Commission should make the decision on a case by case basis.

Commissioner Margiotta is in favor of limited number of units and amount of time.

Mr. Ambruso reiterated to the Commission his purchase requirements as a dealer.

Vice Chairman Harley inquired and Mr. Gillespie indicated the Commission should determine calendar dates for when equipment may be displayed to make it easier for the Zoning Enforcement Officer to enforce.

Mr. Ambruso indicated he would like the months of May - July and October - December.

Commissioner Oickle suggested no more than three (3) pieces of equipment to which Mr. Ambruso agreed was appropriate.

Commissioner Margiotta inquired and Mr. Ambruso indicated the equipment is not displayed on elevated platforms noting the sidewalk sits above the level of the parking lot.

Commissioner Hammer proposed a timeframe of eight (8) weeks, with no more than three (3) units to return for review in eighteen (18) months.

Chairman Roberts suggested the Commission choose a length of time and allow Town Staff to work with the Applicant to determine dates.

Motion: Commissioner Margiotta made a motion to close **APPLICATION NO. 1861-15-Z John Ambruso Jr.** Seeking a Special Permit in accordance with Section 5.3 of the Wethersfield Zoning Regulations for outdoor retail display at 526 Silas Deane Highway.

Second: Commissioner Oickle seconded the motion.

Aye: Roberts, Harley, Margiotta, Hughes, Oickle, Fazzina, Allard;

Nay: none;

Abs: Dean;

Vote: 7-0.

Motion: Commissioner Hughes made a motion to approve **APPLICATION NO. 1861-15-Z John Ambruso Jr.** Seeking a Special Permit in accordance with Section 5.3 of the Wethersfield Zoning Regulations for outdoor retail display at 526 Silas Deane Highway with the following stipulations:

1. There shall be on display no more than three (3) units at any time.
2. The display shall be permitted for a total of eight (8) weeks per calendar year as determined by

Town Staff.

3. The Applicant shall return in eighteen (18) months for review by the Commission.

Second: Commissioner Oickle seconded the motion.

Discussion:

Vice Chairman Harley indicated he is open to a longer timeframe than eight (8) weeks noting the original discussion of sixteen (16) weeks. Commissioner Fazzina is in agreement.

Commissioner Hughes indicated the Applicant could return to the Commission after this season if it goes well and ask for more time.

Commissioner Allard would like more time to allow for inconsistencies in weather.

Chairman Roberts would also like to see more time.

Commissioner Hughes amended his motion to allow twelve (12) weeks and Commissioner Oickle seconded the amendment.

Aye: Roberts, Harley, Margiotta, Hughes, Oickle, Fazzina, Allard;

Nay: none;

Abs: Dean;

Vote: 7-0.

3.3 APPLICATION NO. 1852-15-Z Joseph Moruzzi Seeking Site Plan & Design Review Amendment in accordance with Section 6.2 of the Wethersfield Zoning Regulations for a parking lot expansion and associated landscaping & site improvements at Hewitt Street Rear & 1267-1309 Silas Deane Highway.

Kevin Johnson of Close, Jensen & Miller appeared before the Commission regarding this Application. He indicated they are seeking to amend the approved site plan to reflect the correct number of parking spaces. They originally tabulated five hundred and fifty-five (555) parking spaces for the plaza but the addition of Chip's resulted in a loss of four (4) spaces thus making the correct total 551.

Chairman Roberts inquired and Mr. Johnson indicated the number of trees will remain the same, only the parking waiver will change.

Mr. Gillespie indicated the Commission would be making a motion to approve the amended site plan, dated 5/1/15, as the site plan of record. He noted he would then draft a letter from the Town which will allow the Applicant to move forward.

Mr. Johnson indicated all pages of the site plan reflect the revised numbers. Commissioner Hughes indicated they would be voting to approve the plan, not the specific number.

Motion: Commissioner Hughes made a motion to close **APPLICATION NO. 1852-15-Z Joseph Moruzzi** Seeking Site Plan & Design Review Amendment in accordance with Section 6.2 of the Wethersfield Zoning Regulations for a parking lot expansion and associated landscaping & site improvements at Hewitt Street Rear & 1267-1309 Silas Deane Highway.

Second: Commissioner Oickle seconded the motion.

Aye: Roberts, Harley, Margiotta, Hughes, Oickle, Fazzina, Dean, Allard;

Nay: none;

Vote: 8-0.

Motion: Commissioner made a motion to approve **APPLICATION NO. 1852-15-Z Joseph Moruzzi** Seeking Site Plan & Design Review Amendment in accordance with Section 6.2 of the Wethersfield Zoning Regulations for a parking lot expansion and associated landscaping & site improvements at Hewitt Street Rear & 1267-1309 Silas Deane Highway.

Second: Commissioner seconded the motion.

Aye: Roberts, Harley, Margiotta, Hughes, Oickle, Fazzina, Dean, Allard;

Nay: none;

Vote: 8-0.

4. OTHER BUSINESS:

4.1 Pre-Application Review – 295 Ridge Road.

Doug Ellis, Buck and Buck LLC, appeared before the Commission regarding this application along with Tom Arcari of Quisenberry Arcari Architects LLC, and Ron Weber, Greg Thatchen and Mark Swiffler from Ridge Road Development LLC.

Mr. Ellis indicated the site had been approved as an SRD zone 10 years ago and will need to be subdivided in order to meet any setbacks. He presented two (2) options for subdivision of the property.

Vice Chairman Harley inquired and Mr. Ellis indicated the parcel surrounding the existing buildings is approximately 1.5.

Tom Arcari presented to the Commission conceptual drawings of a seventy (70) unit three (3) story wood framed structure. It would consist of forty (40) two bedroom and thirty (30) one bedroom units in an L-shaped configuration that would include a common lobby, management office and central elevator. Mr. Arcari also presented architectural images for the proposed buildings which would use a series of vertically dormered elements with various exterior materials and textures in an attempt to break down the scale of the building.

Commissioner Hughes inquired and Mr. Arcari indicated the central tower would be a four story cathedral ceiling.

Mr. Arcari indicated the building would have high end finishes throughout. He presented a preliminary parking and landscape plan which will be in compliance with regulations. He also indicated plans to develop a buffer on the south side, a buffer on the east side to separate the two (2) developments and a

buffer and fencing on the north side of the site.

Commissioner Oickle noted the site has varied in past for approvals and questioned if any market study has been done for housing needs for the area. He indicated the neighborhood is not a multifamily area and while it sits back from the road neighbors have felt strongly in prior approvals for single family development. He feels the site looks atrocious as is and questioned the missing fence which had been required in in past approvals. He inquired as to who will own the newly split property.

Mr. Ellis indicated the lot will be split and have separate ownership as Ridge Road Development cannot proceed without the split.

Vice Chairman Harley inquired and Mr. Ellis indicated the existing building will be used in some way but either way they create the split there will be an issue with not meeting all the zoning regulations.

Commissioner Oickle inquired and Mr. Ellis indicated they are required to have a minimum of three (3) acres for an SRD zone. He indicated the minimum requirement for a condo is two (2) acres.

Commissioner Margiotta inquired and Mr. Ellis indicated the number of condo units being proposed for the rear is not the issue and reducing the number will not bring them into compliance. He also indicated an existing eighteen (18") inch MDC sanitary sewer line running through the property as a constraint.

Mr. Gillespie indicated to Commissioner Oickle the owner has discussed with staff the viable scenarios but the rear lot regulations were written for single family dwellings so that is not an option. The proposed dwelling meets frontage requirement but the split brings the condo site to less than 2 acres.

Commissioner Dean and Mr. Gillespie went into discussion about lot lines and ownership.

Commissioner Fazzina and Mr. Gillespie discussed the elimination of the age restriction by the Commission. Commissioner Fazzina noted the need for a traffic study to account for additional vehicle traffic on Ridge Road.

Vice Chairman Harley indicated the zone change was approved with a specific proposed layout in mind. Mr. Gillespie indicated the Assisted Living proposal was smaller, but same location, shape and number floors

Commissioner Oickle inquired and Mr. Arcari indicated they did conduct a market study. The study indicated a need for the number of units, many of which will serve older couples. They study did not indicate a significant need for three bedroom dwellings but Mr. Arcari was open to the idea of adding a few.

Mr. Arcari indicated they would like to address all issues when they come back for the formal Application Hearing.

Commissioner Oickle indicated Wethersfield is not lacking in multifamily housing. Mr. Arcari noted they can accommodate the demands of the elderly without marketing strictly to them.

Commissioner Oickle inquired and Mr. Gillespie indicated the fence around units was taken down by the owner and the Building Department did not insist it go back up.

Commissioner Oickle inquired and Mr. Arcari indicated their goal is to make the building complimentary to the neighborhood by taking a large structure and downplaying it with features comparable to other structures in community. Other footprint locations were proposed to staff but did not allow for necessary emergency apparatus clearances.

Vice Chairman Harley inquired and Mr. Arcari indicated the front two-unit building will be a rehabilitation project. They've considered using it as a common space for the two properties. Vice Chairman Harley indicated concern for the condos being so close to the adjoining property line. Mr. Gillespie indicated the property layout and internal property line term would need to be considered as a side yard or front yard, and either way would require an exception to the setbacks.

Commissioner Allard inquired and Mr. Gillespie indicated the Town defers to the designers to work out details of utility coordination and to confirm it during staff review. Storm water management is done through the Town Engineer and the Town will require quality treatment.

Mr. Ellis indicated there is underground piping to treat runoff water.

Commissioner Margiotta inquired and Mr. Ellis indicated the Fire Marshal has viewed the proposal.

Commissioner Dean indicated an interest in seeing the proposal include solar panels or other energy conservation measures.

Mr. Arcari indicated they designed a similar building in West Hartford which follows all aspects of the new International Energy Code and this building will follow suit.

Mr. Ellis asked the Commission for input on how they would prefer to see the lot split. Mr. Gillespie indicated the smaller condo lot size was favorable. There would be an agreement for shared parking between the two units.

There was discussion about lot size.

Vice Chairman Harley indicated uncertainty over the existing two-unit structure. Mr. Ellis indicated it could be removed if need be.

5. MINUTES – April 21, 2015 Planning & Zoning Commission Meeting Minutes

Motion: Commissioner Oickle motioned to approve the April 21, 2015 minutes as corrected.

Second: Vice Chairman Harley seconded the motion.

The Commissioners discussed the wording in the stipulations for Application **1859-15-Z**.

Aye: Roberts, Harley, Hughes, Oickle, Dean, Allard;

Nay: none;

Abs: Margiotta, Fazzina;

Vote: 6-0.

Minutes for the April 21, 2015 Planning & Zoning Commission Meeting Approved.

6. STAFF REPORTS:

Mr. Gillespie indicated there has been other multifamily development interest. He noted the Wethersfield Diner is looking to reopen following renovations. O'Reily Auto Parts will be moving in on the Silas Deane Highway. Putnam Park is 95% occupied and is moving forward with the fit out for a restaurant.

Commissioner Oickle inquired and Mr. Gillespie indicated he will be resuming monthly reports.

7. PUBLIC COMMENTS ON GENERAL MATTERS OF PLANNING AND ZONING:

8. CORRESPONDENCE:

There was brief discussion of the Zoning Board of Appeals Agenda.

9. PENDING APPLICATIONS TO BE HEARD AT FUTURE MEETINGS:

There are no pending applications.

10. ADJOURNMENT:

Motion: Commissioner Hughes motioned to adjourn the meeting at 9:00 pm.

Second: Vice Chairman Harley seconded the motion.

Aye: Roberts, Harley, Margiotta, Hughes, Oickle, Fazzina, Dean, Allard;

Nay: none;

Vote: 8-0.

Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
Lindsay Schmitt, Recording Secretary